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ADMINISTRATOR:

Former Gov. Schwarzenegger "Rips" Into Pruitt On Twitter Over Auto

Emissions. The [Huffington Post](#) (1/23) reports that former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger “ripped” into President Trump’s pick to lead the EPA, Scott Pruitt, in a series of tweets on Monday. “My Republican colleague here is all about states’ rights – except the right to clean air & save lives from pollution,” tweeted Schwarzenegger, after Pruitt suggested that California may no longer be allowed to set its own stricter emission rules for cars and trucks under his agency. The [Los Angeles Times](#) (1/23, Halper) reports Schwarzenegger’s comments “echo the allegation of Democrats that Pruitt favors expanding the rights of states to forge their own path on environmental regulation – but only when states want less of it.”

WSJ: Pruitt’s First Action Should Be To Pebble Mine Veto. An editorial in the [Wall Street Journal](#) (1/23) calls on EPA Administrator-designate Scott Pruitt to revoke the Pebble Mine veto as one of his first actions in his new office. The Journal claims that the veto was justified by phony science, and is a violation of state’s rights. Revoking the veto would signal to developers that the Trump administration will ensure a fair review of new projects, and according to the Journal, that may be the key to unlocking billions in new investments and creating thousands of new jobs.

Sierra Club Digital Ad Targets Pruitt. [Greenwire](#) (1/24, Bowlin) reports on a new digital ad from the Sierra Club accusing Scott Pruitt of “failing to protect Oklahomans from coal ash.”

Additional Reading.

- ***EPA Valero Energy Was Dismissed From Pruitt’s Double-Dipping Case.*** [E&E Publishing](#). (1/23) (1/23)

AIR:

Local TV Coverage: Dry Cleaner Chemical Contamination. [WTEN-TV](#) Albany, NY (1/23, 6:08 p.m. EST) reported, “Tonight, EPA officials will meet with concerned people in Ballston Spa and answer their questions about potential air contamination in their neighborhood. ...This past August, different kinds of chemicals were found in the area of Rickett’s Dry Cleaning. And tonight, the EPA will be answering people’s concerns as to how bad these

chemicals are. The EPA says they need to test for vapor intrusion in about 50 nearby homes and businesses. The concern now is that the chemicals got into the ground water. Homes in the area get their water from the village, and not from wells, but we’re told chemical vapors could be seeping into foundations. We do know members with the EPA will be back out here next month to test individual homes and businesses. The meeting is expected to start in about an hour here at Elks Lodge.”

[WXXA-TV](#) Albany, NY (1/23, 10:06 p.m. EST) featured EPA official Don Graham, who reported, “It’s hard to draw a cause and effect if somebody suffering any kind of ill effects whether or not this was the problem. And like I mentioned earlier, a lot of these compounds are typically in people’s homes anyway based on what they may be bringing into homes themselves. The EPA is expected to sample the 60 homes the 13 and 20 of next month. The results will not be available until about a month later.”

Additional Reading.

- ***EPA Addresses Air Quality Concerns In Ballston Spa.*** [WRGB-TV](#). Albany, NY (1/23).
- ***2 Louisville-Area Power Plants Cut Toxic Air Pollution.*** [AP](#). (1/23)

BROWNFIELDS/SUPERFUND/OTHER CLEANUPS:

Bird Deaths At Superfund Toxic Pit Spark Concerns About Future

Consequences. The [AP](#) (1/23) reports on the nearly 3,000 snow geese that landed in “a 50 billion-gallon toxic stew in a former copper mine that is part of the nation’s largest Superfund site” outside of Butte, Montana. According to nearby residents, the snow geese deaths “were a wake-up call that raises broader questions about the site.” In 2023, the water level at the pit is expected to hit the critical level of 5,410 feet, above which point “water from the pit and flooded mines under the city could escape into Silver Bow Creek.” Another fifty feet higher, “the pit and mine water would enter the city’s groundwater.” The EPA negotiated a solution with the owners of the mine and nearby mines that “relies on a water treatment plant built near the pit in 2000,” however, “community activists worry the treatment-

plant option is being favored because it's the cheapest technology, not the best."

Local TV Coverage: Uranium Mine

Cleaning. KOAT-TV Albuquerque, NM (1/23, 8:07 p.m. EST) reported, "The Environmental Protection Agency is working to clean up 94 abandoned uranium mines around the country, including dozens on the Navajo Nation. According to the Daily Times, the US, Navajo Nation and a mining company reached a 600 million dollar settlement last week to clean up the mines. Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye says he appreciates the effort to clean up uranium contamination that's affected the tribe for decades. No word when the work will begin."

BUDGET:

Trump Transition Team Plans Major Budget Cuts For EPA.

The Hill (1/23, Cama) reports that Trump administration's EPA transition team "is planning major budget cuts, as well as regulatory and scientific overhauls at the agency." Head of the transition team Myron Ebell reportedly authored the "Action Plan," which "identifies more than \$800 million in planned budget cuts, including to state and tribal assistance grants, climate programs and environmental programs and management." In addition, the document "says the EPA should not fund scientific research, should make all science used for regulatory decisions public and should overhaul its scientific advisory board." Many of the actionable plans on the plan would require approval from Congress, which is notable because some of the EPA's programs, like state and tribal assistance grants, "enjoy strong bipartisan support."

The Washington Examiner (1/23) reports that the plan highlighted a number of programs that would be stopped, such as greenhouse gas regulations for coal and natural gas power plants, vehicle fuel efficiency standards, and the Waters of the U.S. Rule. In addition, the document recommended issuing "an executive order barring EPA from overruling federal/state regulatory/permit decisions unless in clear violation of established law." The Daily Intelligencer (NY) (1/23, Kilgore) provides additional coverage.

EPA Transition Team Confirms Freeze On Grant Program. The Hill (1/23, Master) reports

that on Monday night, head of the EPA transition team Myron Ebell confirmed that the agency has frozen its grant program, which provide funding for "among other things – cleanup of toxic sites, air quality monitoring, water quality testing." According to a Huffington Post report, EPA staff have been told not to discuss the order. Ebell explained, "This may be a little wider than some previous administrations, but it's very similar to what others have done." The Washington Post (1/23, Dennis, Eilperin) says the move could impact "everything from state-led climate research to localized efforts to improve air and water quality to environmental justice projects aimed at helping poor communities."

New Members Of Trump EPA Drawn Heavily From Energy Industry Lobby. Reuters (1/23, Volcovici, Gardner) reports that the Trump administration recently named 10 new members to its EPA team, many of whom come from "the energy industry lobby and pro-drilling think tanks." The team's make-up "has reinforced expectations that Trump will follow through on his promise to slash U.S. environmental regulation as a way to promote drilling and mining." E&E Publishing (1/23) reports in more detail on some of the members of Trump's EPA "beachhead team."

CLIMATE CHANGE:

CDC Cancels Climate Change Conference To Avoid Conflict With Incoming Administration.

The AP (1/23, Stobbe) reports that the Center for Disease Control has canceled a conference planned for next month on climate change and health, "but isn't saying why publicly." A co-sponsor claims that the CDC "was worried how the conference would be viewed by the Trump administration." He clarified that the Trump administration "did not ask or order that the meeting be canceled," instead, the decision to cancel was a "strategic retreat," according to Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.

ENFORCEMENT:

US Judge Approves VW Emissions Scandal Settlement.

Reuters (1/23) reports US District Judge Charles Breyer has given "final approval to Volkswagen AG's (VOWG_p. DE)

settlement worth up to \$1.21 billion with 652 U.S. dealers over its diesel emissions scandal.” Under the settlement, VW dealers will each receive an average of \$1.85 million over 18 months. Additionally, VW pledged to continue “making volume-based incentive payments to dealers, and will allow them to defer capital improvements for two years.”

Local TV Coverage: Refinery Fined In Washington State. [KATU-TV](#) Portland, OR (1/23, 9:37 p.m. EST) reported, “The Tesoro Refinery in Washington has been hit with a fine for violating the Clean Air Act. It’s a Texas-based company with a poor environmental and safety record. This is video from a 2010 explosion at the Mount Redoubt Vernon, Washington, plants. The EPA says the facility failed two inspections in 2011 that could have led to dangerous chemical leaks. While Tesoro is disputing the findings, the company has agreed to pay a \$325,000 fine.”

INTERNATIONAL:

Additional Reading.

- ***Paris Rolls Out Color-code Stickers For Cars To Curb Pollution.*** [Reuters](#). (1/23, Libert)

OTHER NEWS:

Lehr Says Time Has Come To End EPA. In a commentary for [Breitbart](#) (1/23), Jay H. Lehr, Ph.D., science director of The Heartland Institute, writes that during the “Republican National Convention last summer, the GOP approved a platform that stated: ‘We propose to shift responsibility for environmental regulation from the federal bureaucracy to the states and to transform the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] into an independent bipartisan commission, similar to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, with structural safeguards against politicized science.’” The platform also says “We will likewise forbid the EPA to regulate carbon dioxide, something never envisioned when Congress passed the Clean Air Act.” Lehr added, “Trump and the GOP are saying, finally, what millions of people have been thinking for a long time: EPA has become the cause of, not the solution to, the nation’s major environmental problems. It’s time to end EPA.”

Senate Committee Postpones Votes On Perry, Zinke.

[The Hill](#) (1/23, Henry) reports Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has postponed a vote, which was scheduled for Tuesday morning, on two of President Trump’s cabinet nominees, former Texas governor Rick Perry to head the Energy Department and Rep. Ryan Zinke to be the next Interior Secretary. On Monday evening, the committee said that the hearing will be delayed “until further notice.” Perry and Zinke “have not been considered especially controversial nominees.” [Reuters](#) (1/23) reports “the panel gave no reason for the delay.” [NBC News](#) (1/24) also provides coverage of the postponement on its website.

The [Washington Examiner](#) (1/23) reports both “nominees are less controversial than Trump’s pick to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, who is being considered by the Environment and Public Works Committee.” The three men “are the key Cabinet officials who would drive Trump’s energy and environment agenda.” A separate article by [The Hill](#) (1/23, Cama, Henry) reports that if the nominations are approved by the committee, “they’ll move to the floor for a final confirmation vote.”

Watchdog Group Director Says Perry Avoided “Oops” Moment During Hearing.

[ClimateWire](#) (1/23) reports Perry’s performance during the hearing “has earned him praise for style and criticism on substance” and that he “avoided saying anything controversial in his bid to lead” DOE. Director of Texans for Public Justice Craig McDonald said, “I thought he didn’t have any ‘oops’ moments at all.” McDonald added, “I thought he was pretty cautious. ... I think his positions are more extreme than he characterized them [Thursday]. What it’s going to be going forward, I don’t know. What we do know about him is he’s a good politician.”

In an article about the new Senate cybersecurity panel, [Bloomberg BNA](#) (1/23, Stoller) reports many Cabinet nominees “have been tackling cybersecurity questions in their confirmation hearings.” Perry “said at his hearing for Energy secretary Jan. 19 that he will take responsibility for the Energy Department’s cybersecurity concerns.”

SAEN: Perry Did “Reasonably Well” At Confirmation Hearing. In an editorial the [San Antonio Express-News](#) (1/23) writes that during

his confirmation hearing the former Texas governor “performed reasonably well.” The piece goes on to say that it was important that Perry “disavowed a controversial questionnaire President Donald J. Trump’s transition team had given to the Energy Department” and he highlighted that “the questionnaire preceded his selection to the post.” He stated, “I didn’t approve it. I don’t approve of it. I don’t need that information. I don’t want that information. ... I have a history of working with people to deal with the challenges that face us.” The Express News concludes, “It’s the last point that could be Perry’s greatest strength overseeing what he now understands is a vital and significant agency.”

Smitherman Resigns Partnership From Vinson & Elkins Law Firm. Fuel Fix (TX) (1/23) reports Barry Smitherman, former chairman of the Railroad Commission of Texas and the Public Utility Commission of Texas, has “resigned his partnership at Vinson & Elkins on Friday.” Smitherman left the firm to “pursue other career opportunities and interests,” the firm said in a statement. Last month, “Smitherman wrote an opinion piece in the Dallas Morning News about why former Texas Governor Rick Perry is a great pick to be the next U.S. secretary of energy.” Smitherman “pointed to Perry’s work in creating a competitive electricity market for consumers, spurred the development of wind power and supported the domestic oil and gas industry with extra resources, especially as fracking greatly enhanced production.”

Chapin Criticizes Trump For “Going After” Intellectual “Elites.” In a piece highly critical of Trump for “going after” on intellectual “elites” and his Cabinet choices, Laura Chapin, a Democratic communications strategist, writes for U.S. News & World Report (1/23, Chapin) that “in his elevation of ignorance and dismissal of ‘elites,’ Trump is nominating cronies, contributors and fools to some of the most important jobs in Washington.” Among the Energy Department’s “priorities” are “ensuring the integrity and safety of the country’s nuclear weapons.” President Obama’s most recent energy secretary, Ernest Moniz, “is a nuclear physicist.” Stephen Chu, who came before Moniz, “won the Nobel Prize.” Perry, Trump’s nominee for the post, received “a D in meat science at Texas A&M and blanked on the name of the agency itself at a Republican debate.” Chapin contends “these people have no idea what they’re doing or have the slightest competence at

running a federal agency” but they are “loyal” to Trump and “that’s all that matters.”

Additional Reading.

- **Obama’s EPA Chief Keeps Twitter Handle.** Washington Examiner. (1/24, Emery)
- **SOURCE: Career EPA Staffers Will Undermine Trump, Leak To The Press.** Daily Caller. (1/23, Bastasch)

PESTICIDES:

Additional Reading.

- **DDT In Spotlight As Trump Team Takes EPA Helm.** Greenwire (1/23)

RULES/REGULATIONS/POLICY

:

Energy Institute’s Guith Quoted On Potential Rollback Of Methane Regulations.

The Washington Examiner (1/23) reports that Congress “needs to move quickly” if it intends to use the Congressional Review Act to halt new methane emission and coal mining rules “before the 60-day deadline for doing so is up.” The article says that Republicans already missed an opportunity “to strike down one layer of methane rules” that were issued by the Environmental Protection Agency regarding leaks from oil wells and pipelines because they “only just realized that the 60-day window had passed.” However, Institute for 21st Century Energy vice president Christopher Guith explained that it is “not too late” to dismiss the Bureau of Land Management’s “methane venting and flaring rule, which will likely get CRA’d.”

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